on the COVER

The "tree of life" (lygnman vitae), a rare, native plant found in the Florida Keys, shows off its soft purple blooms.

The waterfront in Key West bustles with activity all year long.

A DAY AT THE DISTRICT

Howard Wegis and Linda Hoppes recently visited the Lee County site to check on construction progress of this reverse osmosis plant, funded in part with an alternative water supply grant from the District. Two above-ground tanks (in the background) together can store 5 million gallons of water.

Planning for the Future with...

LINDA HOPPES
Lead Planner

Determining regional water needs and developing sound, workable solutions to address those demands is anything but guess work. It requires the talent, commitment and expertise of a multi-discipline team. For the District's west coast area, Linda Hoppes leads that charge.

As project manager for the Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan, Hoppes depends on a cadre of environmental scientists, engineers, computer modelers, geologists, planners and other experts. Working together with local government officials, water utilities, environmental interests and major users such as the agricultural industry, planners like Hoppes and her team use high-tech computer models to track and forecast population growth. They also monitor changes in local businesses, agriculture and industries; they document patterns in zoning and land development.

Yet that's only part of the job. Knowing what will be needed does not magically make water appear. Planners must bring community decision-makers together so that projects and programs are in place to meet future needs. One way to increase water availability is by developing and implementing "alternative" water supplies at the local level. This concept encompasses many types of efforts, from building new water treatment or storage facilities to expanding regional water delivery systems.

On a typical day, Hoppes and other District staff meet with water utility representatives and engineering consultants to discuss technical details of alternative water supply initiatives.

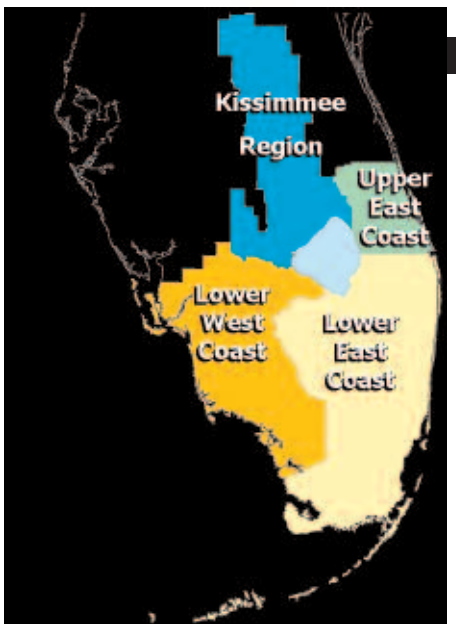
Case in point: a consortium of six utilities (Lee County, Collier County, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Naples) aim to build a reclaimed irrigation distribution system (RIDS), which will increase the use of reclaimed water on Florida's lower west coast. RIDS, basically, is a network of interconnected pipes and storage facilities. This will allow communities to share reclaimed water (wastewater that is treated and reused), primarily for irrigation use, vastly reducing their draw on the region's freshwater supply. This means greater availability of freshwater resources to meet the growing residential, business, agricultural and environmental water supply needs of Lee and Collier counties. The project also will capture stormwater to supplement the reclaimed water supplies.

Linda Hoppes and District Senior Engineer Nestor Garrido (center) meet in Fort Myers with Howard Wegis, staff engineer at Lee County Utilities. Their goal is to plan alternative water supply projects that will help protect the lower west coast's freshwater resources.

Hoppes praises area elected officials, public utilities and citizens for being highly supportive of alternative water supply. "They have a lot of foresight," she said. "Protecting the Caloosahatchee River and its estuary are important here, so projects that mean less treated wastewater discharge into the waterway, like using reclaimed water for irrigation, are widely supported."

The numbers back her up: 83 percent of the wastewater treated in the Lower West Coast region is reused for beneficial purposes. The RIDS project will potentially make available at least 200 million gallons per day. Over 50 percent of the water allocated for public water supply is from the brackish Floridan Aquifer.

Identifying and addressing water supply needs is a constant challenge. Hoppes and her team must keep one eye on the future while juggling dozens of present-day issues. Thanks to their continued coordination with local governments and other partners, it's a task they're more than up to meeting. You can plan on it.



Water Supply Planning Regions

LOWER WEST COAST
Plan Update scheduled for completion in 2005
Project Manager: Linda Hoppes
561-682-2213 or lhoppes@sfwmd.gov

LOWER EAST COAST
Plan Update scheduled for completion in 2005
Project Manager: Jim Jackson
561-682-6334 or jjackson@sfwmd.gov

KISSIMMEE REGION
Plan Update scheduled for completion in 2005
Project Manager: Chris Sweazy
407-858-6100, Ext. 3822 or csweazy@sfwmd.gov

UPPER EAST COAST
Plan Update completed in 2004
Project Manager: Mark Elsner
561-682-6156 or melsner@sfwmd.gov

***For more information on water supply plans and public workshops, contact the project manager or visit* www.sfwmd.gov**

Find Freddy!

Where in the District is Freddy?

CLUES:

- Freddy shows delight as he enjoys the fresh breezes in this coastal environment.
- The shoreline is fringed with silver buttonwood seedlings and red mangroves, vegetation that is typical in this locale.
- The salty water body borders the third-longest living reef system in the world and is alive with sea creatures – fish, spiny lobster, sponges and colorful corals.
- The reef system is located in close proximity to a large, highly urbanized coastal area.

Give up? The answer is on the back page.